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FASCISM IS INSIDIOUS

by John D. Montgomery

Adherents of representative government like to regard Fascism as a temporary manifestation brought about by the demands of total war. One need not go far, however, for evidence that Fascism may come with the post-war problems of disillusionment, unemployment, and economic upsets. It may come, too, with pre-war hysteria, inflamed nationalism, and patriotic incitements to that uniformity sometimes miscalled unity.

With some glaring exceptions, such as dispossession of Japanese-Americans on the West Coast, our country has maintained a good record in preserving human liberties during wartime. But we may be congratulating ourselves too soon, turning our backs upon the real dangers which remain to threaten democratic survival.

The dramatic manner of Fascism's entrance and successes in the Twentieth Century has sometimes obscured in blood and castor oil the more permanent implications of the movement's philosophy. With the deaths of Hitler and Mussolini, and the passing in the United States of splintered factions of "native Fascism", a dangerous complacence has set in. The mighty effort required to destroy the Axis has blinded us to the insidious forces that made the Fascist nations our enemies.

Fascism is neither a recurrence of ancient tyrannies nor an inexplicable malady peculiar to the enfeebled societies of Europe. It has only a surface continuity with previous despotisms, as in its use of mechanisms of terror and its denial of individual liberty. These mechanisms, though they are essential to Fascism's success, must not be mistaken for the nature of the evil itself. The germ of Fascism is something far more subtle, deeply embedded in the civilization, not merely of Germany or Italy or Hungary or Spain -- but indeed of all Western Europe and North America. It is no more a "German disease" than a certain unpleasant social disease was (in spite of its name) a "French disease".

If Fascism is more than the studied brutality common to all despotisms, what is it? Like the clear-toned apologists for divine-right kings, the modern dictator always finds lofty ideals to justify his oppressions: ideals which are universal enough in their appeal to make even the victims of the regime occasionally feel twinges of doubt and uncertainty. Like the tyrannies of Zwingli's Geneva colony, or of the

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pilgrim theocracies of Massachusetts, Fascism proclaims its mission to be a response to the highest callings of humanity, a fulfillment of modern man's deepest needs. It obscures itself in a cloud of mystical idealism, and even in its actions is not easily defined.

Yet Fascism has identifiable characteristics that can be cited to distinguish it from Communism, and from representative government.

II

First of all, Fascism is anti-Communist. This is essential, for it thus makes an across-the-board appeal to practically everyone who has known that pride in personal achievement and fulfilled opportunity which Communism threatens to destroy. Fascism seizes upon the fear inspired by Bolshevism, and draws thousands of unwary followers who would prefer anything to a Red Revolution.

Mussolini played up an already played-out Leftist revolt in Milan, using the weapon of fear to secure the support of industrialists and the middle class. Hitler created his own Communist menace by setting fire to the Reichstag building and blaming it on the Communists. All Fascists everywhere promise prompt and efficient elimination of the Red Menace, and a gullible multiude takes the bait, surrendering its liberties in the great crusade against Moscow.

Second, Fascism appeals to the masses, to the "mass-man". Like Communism, it obtains the support of Labor by promising greater social security and full employment. But, unlike Communism, Fascism captivates industry by its offer to protect the institutions of corporate ownership and to maintain a high production level.

It appeals to some intellectuals by apparent isolation from both Capital and Labor. If there are many unemployed, ipso facto disillusioned and frustrated, they can find excitement, renewed social participation, and a sense of cause under the banner of Fascist nationalism. Fascism seeks to be all things to all men and secures the support of groups by attacking other groups (Jews, or Communists, or Negroes). It exploits social needs by appeals to the fundamental human desires of security, pride, excitement, and vicarious self-assertion.

III

Fascism tries to compensate for the "weaknesses" of representative government. It provides a vast bureaucracy of loyal "experts". These well-paid henchmen are absolved from responsibility to the electorate or their representatives. This relieves the public of "unnecessary" decision-making by placing more and more power in the hands of administrative boards and commissions. Fascism deafens the ears of its citizens with over-simplified propaganda defending its "way of life" against ex-

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aggerated or imagined foes. It "co-ordinates" the military with an executive program outside the control of the people.

The fundamental instrument of representative government -- the elected legislature -- may voluntarily surrender some of its powers in the face of drummed-up emergency and political pressures. Then the spokesmen of the people allow the purse-strings to slip out of their fingers, and the Congress resigns itself to the simpler task of merely approving appropriations and tax measures after ineffectual debate.

Fourth, Fascism substitutes a new mythology of gods, heroes, and virtues. It promises security and degrades opportunity as anarchistic. It glorifies nationalism and belittles individualism. It praises the omnipotent State and robs all voluntary social associations of their liberties. Instead of independence and self-reliance, Fascism urges political uniformity and social conformity. A common enemy -- a racial or political scapegoat -- is used to build up indifference or hostility to principles of toleration. Thus variety in political and social life gradually disappears. A fierce national pride replaces Christian humility, and war preparedness becomes more important than peace efforts. Under Fascism the citizen lives in an atmosphere of suspicion, where minor ideological differences are magnified to seem like disloyalty.

Fascism thrives in a psychology of emergency. Wars and rumors of wars are a useful means of diverting men's attentions from the miners and sappers of their liberties. If national defense does not sufficiently enforce conformity, domestic issues must be raised to "crisis" level and dealt with decisively, unhesitatingly, and noisily. If it is possible to blame domestic troubles on the activities of an "unfriendly" nation or its ideology, so much the better, for national defense and internal policy can then be integrated even more effectively into the militant Fascist campaign.

IV

Here, in brief, are some of the universal characteristics of Fascism, omitting elements peculiar to particular nations. Not all of these characteristics are necessarily evil in themselves. Order is no disaster, except when it substitutes the uniformity of the concentration camp for truly co-operative unity. Discipline is evil only when it destroys freedom and initiative. Even status and hierarchy may be useful if free movement to and from all levels is available to all people.

But in the aggregate these elements, consciously exaggerated, lately constituted a threat to all of Western civilization. And it would seem

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that these same Fascist elements are becoming increasingly important in contemporary America, by invisible degrees and in insidious disguises.

Is our economic collectivism, for example, the product of Marxist thinking, or is it more akin to what one writer calls "the logic of war"? Not infrequently, loose-thinking "liberals" suggest that collectivism is an antidote to Fascism, forgetting that cartels furnished the oxygen for Hitler's economy.

Was FDR's war on depression less militant than that waged by Mussolini? And what about outright militarism? It is true that we have no private armies of trained men, but our public military force is peacetime's largest. Today we have little spare manpower, but when we did have it we formed a semi-military organization that solved unemployment (so did Hitler) and conserved our soil (Mussolini drained marshes). Will further growth in unemployment bring a new CCC?

Is our anti-Communism today less dogmatic and thoroughgoing than that of Fascist Italy during the early stages of dictatorship? Have our "Fair Dealing" promises to Labor and the farmers been any less solicitous -- or impertinent -- than those made in Germany by Hitler?

To escape the dangers of Communism, we may be turning our backs on a far more imminent danger. In seeking out the extent of disloyalties, we could easily see our Un-American Activities Committee itself perform un-American activities.

Merely calling something "Fascist" does not, of course, make it evil. It is with the substantive evils that accompany a decline in political morality that we are here concerned. The false hope of security based on increased centralization of power, the trumped-up excuses for denying liberties of speech and opinion, the gradual relinquishment of personal responsibilities and duties: these are the dangerous symptoms which Americans must consider today for what they may easily become tomorrow. By whatever name, they are evil.

Is America going Fascist? One's answer must be conditional. It depends on our estimate of the strength and vitality of the fundamental value in our democratic polity: maximum opportunity for individual self-realization of all our citizens in a free society.

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By Marion Doenhoff HAMBURG -- November, 1949

A TURNING POINT OF HISTORY: As children we had to study a handbook of old maps to learn something about European history and to become familiar with the territorial changes which had constantly taken place throughout the centuries. Leafing through the pages even a child could see that in all the old peace treaties, which sought to establish the shape of the European countries permanently, could be detected the germs of the following war.

Thinking of such bygone history lessons as the partitions of Poland, it is with the gravest concern that we look at the present frontier of Western Europe, now running right through Germany. Today's page of the atlas shows two separated German republics, printed in different colors, each claiming to be the sole representative of the whole country.

Today the neutral countries find themselves in the dilemma of not knowing which of the two governments is legitimate. The Eastern world has recognized the eastern German government in Berlin, whereas the Western world has recognized the western government of Bonn. Up to now only the Holy See has delegated a de facto papal nuncio for the whole of Germany, the American Bishop Muench in Bonn, with specific authority to defend also the interests of the Roman Catholic Church in the Eastern zone.

The east German government and its President Pieck have been satirized in many cartoons, and the recent statement of Stalin that "the setting up of the peace loving democratic republic of eastern Germany is a turning point in European history" has been frequently ridiculed. However, less prejudiced observers are also asking whether the new east German government in Berlin does not really signify such a turning point, at least as far as Russian intentions are concerned. Watching the fate of the satellite countries, we may take it for granted that the Kremlin does not believe in friendship but relies on slaves. It still remains to be seen whether these slaves are to be won with the whip, or with candy.

There is no doubt that eastern Germany, after years of whipping, is now receiving preferred treatment. While considerable quantities of goods from current production continue to flow from eastern Germany into Russia, it is equally significant that all German factories under Soviet control are in full production -- even the so-called prohibited industries such as synthetic rubber and synthetic gasoline -- and the curse of unemployment does not exist. Furthermore the recent amnesty for all former Nazis and "militarists" is designed to abolish discriminations and has therefore been wholeheartedly welcomed by the population.

Certainly the standard of living in East Germany is low but the disappearance of all discriminating stigmas is a great satisfaction for those concerned. Former army officers, for example, will now receive in due course pensions which are denied to them in western Germany, even if they fought only in the First World War. Many of these veterans are living under miserable conditions, and some of the younger ones who can't find a job and don't know how to make a living are starting to return to eastern Germany in order to join the well paid eastern police. The rumor persists that eastern Germany is going to have general conscription of the male population for this Volkspolizei.

What about youth in eastern Germany? Boys who were thirteen or fourteen years of age when Hitler-Germany collapsed, and who remember only a totalitarian regime, are joining the Volkspolizei today at the age of eighteen or nineteen. They are

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equipped with the most modern weapons and pass from one training course to the next. Their self-respect is bolstered by the Stalin propaganda: "History teaches that Hitlers come and go, but that the German people and the German State continue."

Stalin's shrewd tactics to create a feeling of Russo-German solidarity are further illustrated by his recent telegram to the eastern German leaders, Pieck and Grotewohl: "The greatest sacrifices in the late war were endured by Germany and the Soviet Union. These two nations are the best qualified in Europe to fulfill great and important missions." From a material viewpoint the Germans today are certainly not spoiled. But they are longing for moral recognition and therefore Stalin's approach could eventually be successful. To underline this propaganda the Soviet government is fulfilling its promise to return the German PW's. So far, however, these slogans from the Kremlin are sufficiently detected as such by eastern Germany's population and therefore its government still remains unpopular.

We may ridicule the politicians of the Berlin government and we may laugh at the exchange of diplomats with the eastern countries, especially at the first German ambassador to Moscow. This Herr Appelt, as a Czech citizen, was a Communist deputy in the Czech Parliament for many years. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the government and even a handful of foreign diplomats will bring some glamor back into the ruins of wartorn Berlin. Under Hitler, we anti-Nazi Germans used to be sarcastic about Hitler's Gauleiter in a similar way, because of their crude and obscure origins, but finally they became the all-too powerful masters of Germany. The functionaries of eastern Germany now have the exciting sensation of belonging to an empire extending from the Elbe to the Pacific, embracing some 800 million people. This certainly creates that sense of power which made Malenkov exclaim, on the recent 32nd anniversary of the Russian Revolution: "We don't fear war because the First World War gave birth to the USSR while the second has created the free republic of China as well as the eastern European democracies."

Since the "turning point" -- that is to say, since the creation of the Berlin government, the Soviet press has abstained from criticizing Germany -- even western Germany. And the Mayor of eastern Berlin, Friedrich Ebert, for the first time reminded the communistic SED party not to forget about those without party affiliations because they might become an important asset. President Pieck, who in his first enthusiasm called the Bonn government a Western imperialistic group of "marionettes" has now -- very likely following Moscow's instructions -- completely changed his tune and is most anxious to develop some kind of co-operation between west and east Germany. His first attempt aims at the city of Berlin: The chairman of the Berlin section of the SED, Hans Jendretzki, suggested co-operation to normalize the economic life of western Berlin. The Communist trade union also offered its co-operation to the trade unions of western Berlin in order to save from dismantling the famous Borsig factory -- locomotives and heavy machinery -- which is situated in the French sector of Berlin.

Recent political events in Poland may help to disclose the policy of the Kremlin towards Germany. The appointment of Rokossovsky as "Marshal of Poland" certainly suggests that he will be more than a military Commander in Chief; that he is also expected to play an outstanding political role in the great tradition of Marshal Pilsudski. The Rokossovsky appointment may have three different explanations: it may mean the beginning of a new phase of general centralization in all the satellite countries. It may be due to the strategic consideration of Poland's special importance as a base for frontal attacks on northern Europe. Last but not least it could suggest that the Soviets wish to incorporate Poland as a part of Russia, in order to check and control Polish reactions resulting from possible Soviet concessions to Germany at the expense of Poland. It is not surprising that the general feeling in Poland with respect to the setting up of the new Berlin government, even before Rokossovsky's appointment, was one of intense nervousness.

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GERMANS FAVOR FEDERATION: Wherever Foreign Secretary Dean Acheson appeared, during his visit to Western Germany and Berlin, large crowds gathered and cheered, and enthusiasm ran high. This was in part an expression of gratitude for all the help the United States has extended to the beaten Germany since 1945. But something beyond gratitude also brought people into the streets, in spite of cold and miserable weather. Here was an enthusiastic demonstration for the representative of a nation which has seemingly decided to use its great wealth and influence to build a united Europe, and which free of resentments appreciates and strengthens the position of a democratic Germany within such a newly conceived European federation.

Of course, the possibilities of closer European union can not be measured by standards of the United States. Even the unification of the Central American States would be far easier to accomplish than anything on that line in Western Europe, with all its historic barriers of language and cultural differences. Nevertheless it should be obvious that the period of independent European national States has been ended by the two world wars and that federation remains as the only alternative to decline and decomposition.

Although this is realized by many responsible Europeans of various nationalities, still there are many individual and national hesitations. These are disheartening, not only to the originators of the Marshall Plan but also to the young German Republic. Great Britain sees its key position within the Commonwealth impaired by too closely associating with the European Continent. France knows that only in co-operation with Germany -- and never against her -- can she lead a European federation. But rather than prepare for a genuine rapprochement some Frenchmen would prefer to weaken Germany further, prior to closer association. The Benelux States are even more afraid of the potential of 45 millions of hard-working Germans, once they have got on their feet again. Spain and Portugal feel ill-treated and misunderstood, while Sweden is afraid of Russian resentment if she enters too closely into Western European unification.

Such qualms are not predominant in the Western German Federal Republic. Germany has touched the lowest level in all her history. She therefore knows better than all the other nations that the conception of a Europe of absolutely sovereign national States belongs to the past. By working for a closer union Germany has comparatively less to lose than the other nations -- and everything to win. The German people are longing for moral recognition and an opportunity to prove to the world that they will be as good as any other Europeans in their contribution to European federalism. Mr. Acheson was cheered in Germany because the people believe the United States realizes that the quicker Germany is fully and wholeheartedly incorporated into Western Europe, the quicker European unification will come true.

For this reason the German people are firmly supporting Chancellor Adenauer's pro-European and pro-French policy. The opposition at Bonn is inspired more by reasons of internal policy than by fundamental differences. For instance, when the Socialist leader, Dr. Schumacher, turns bitterly against Dr. Adenauer's idea of admitting international capital into the plants saved from dismantling, it is because he thinks the prospects of nationalization of such industries will vanish.

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THE PROBLEM OF GERMAN UNITY: There is, however, one restriction in the way Germany regards European federation. The longing to reunite east and west Germany must command high priority in any German government's policy. We cannot be expected to enter into any agreement that prejudices this reunion.

The government at Bonn has to be particularly careful in this respect, because the majority of European nations are indifferent towards the problem of German unity, or might even prefer to see the partition of Germany perpetuated. Therefore German foreign policy cannot afford to be merely West-European, but must be European

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in a wider sense. Though convinced that a federation of Western Europe has under present conditions to be the starting point, Germany regards as the final object of her policy the inclusion not only of eastern Germany, but also of the eastern and southeastern European States. These German endeavors might prove a valuable asset to any policy contemplating a more comprehensive European integration.

What is true politically applies equally to the economic side of the picture. Germany and Central Europe cannot be reorganized economically and made into a going concern unless trade with the eastern and southeastern countries of Europe is restored. The bulk of German exports -- over 50 per cent -- always went to these countries, where German trade possessed a good name.

And it is doubtful if the investments of the Marshall Plan up to now have facilitated the economic unification of even Western Europe. Some of the industries which were dismantled in Germany have reappeared in other Western countries, pepped up by Marshall Plan dollars. Furthermore, new industries have been developed or created in these countries to produce goods formerly imported from Germany, or even to use these goods to compete with German exports in those markets where we were once predominant. Under present conditions these natural markets for German industry are closed to us. That is another reason why our policy must simultaneously face West and East; why it must be truly European; not merely West-European.

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THE OVERDONE "D": Looking backward over the record of occupation policy in the three Western zones, one is tempted to comment on the importance attached to negative attitudes. This is implicit in the very names that have been dinned into German ears: Demilitarization; Dismantling; Denazification; Decartellization; Deconcentration.

There is no question that many Germans continue to welcome the purpose of demilitarizing and denazifying their country, even though they are now puzzled by reports that some Americans would like to see a German army defending the Rhine aginst a possible Russian aggression. The point we make here is not so much the desirability of the various "De" and "Dis" procedures, but rather their collective influence on what is called the "Re-education of Germany". Surely American pedagogy realizes that even children do not react constructively to constant repression and denial. Education -- including "re-education" -- is, or should be, a matter of positive and not merely negative training.

The over-emphasis on "De" in occupation policy has had an unfortunate effect on another "De" word of a different character -- "Democracy". A part of occupation policy has been to teach Germans that democracy is most desirable, and that it can best be defined as government of the people, by the people, for the people. But when the application, in Germany, was to govern the people by other people, in the interest of other people, the result, so far as education in democracy is concerned, could scarcely be satisfactory.

It cannot be easy for Americans to consider German problems through German eyes. But if the attempt is made it will probably be admitted that the more self-government given to Germany, the better should be the results of German education in democracy.

Countess Marion Doenhoff, who obtained her doctorate in Political Economy at the University of Basle, is a member of a prominent East German family and was active in the Anti-Nazi Resistance Movement during the war. She is now on the editorial staff of Die Zeit, in Hamburg, and will thence contribute occasional European Supplements to HUMAN EVENTS, alternating with the letters of Bertrand de Jouvenel from Paris.

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